

THE TUSCARAWAS EAST END NEIGHBORHOODS



2010

Part of the Canton Neighborhood Project

The Tuscarawas East End Neighborhoods

AN UNHERALDED TREASURE

INTRODUCTION

Traveling eastward along Tuscarawas Street East, visitors are often struck by the dramatic changes that occur immediately after crossing Belden Avenue. Suddenly, in the neighborhoods on each side of Tuscarawas, houses are in better repair, yards are more manicured, and many fewer properties are abandoned. There is a general sense of manageability to the neighborhoods. To identify these two communities, this report will use the term East End to reference the blocks on each side of Tusc. In the case of the Northeast area, the boundaries are Tusc East, Belden Avenue NE, Georgetown Road NE, and Hamilton Avenue NE. The Southeast area is defined by Tusc East, Belden Avenue SE, US 30, and Cole Avenue SE.

While the areas share an attractive atmosphere of stability and livability, these are distinct places; they have different types of housing and attract and retain a diverse mix of renters and owners. However, taken together, they consistently offer some of the most desirable, affordable housing in Canton. To better understand them and suggest strategies to reinforce these communities, the workplans will look at each place, cite the key strengths and vulnerabilities, and identify possible steps to manage community change.

The reader is also directed to the closing section of these workplans. In that section, it will be argued that Belden Avenue is either a wall or a spine based on local decisions. In the first case, the thoroughfare is imagined as a wall against future problems. Every effort is made to keep disinvestment to the west, so that continued investing in the East End makes sense. In the second case, Belden Avenue is described as a spine that, along Tusc East, links many neighborhoods. This approach argues for shared efforts to manage the distressed neighborhoods west of Belden Avenue as a way to strengthen neighborhoods to the east. It will take neighborhood and civic leadership to determine the best approach for this important part of Canton.

EAST END NORTH

NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

North	East	South	West
Georgetown Road NE	Hamilton Avenue NE	Tuscarawas Street East	Belden Avenue NE

This beautiful neighborhood consists of all blocks from Georgetown Road NE south to Tusc East and from Belden Avenue NE to Hamilton Avenue NE. Most of the oldest properties are closer to Belden Avenue and the newest are closer to the city limits. The neighborhood is almost exclusively a residential community with about 250 single-family houses, a handful of two-family properties, and one high rise for senior and disabled citizens. Although there are a number of houses that were built just before World War I, the majority of the neighborhood was built after World War II, with much of the housing stock being built in the 1950's. Additional houses were built sporadically up to the present. Especially in newer parts of the neighborhood, many of the individual homes are brick and sited on spacious lots. Even in the oldest sections of the neighborhood, no streets have high densities; rather, there is a sense of spaciousness. In addition to Tusc East and Belden Avenue NE, the most traveled streets are Georgetown Road NE and Third Street NE. Most streets have only local traffic and are wide, smooth, and well lit.



This particular part of Tusc East End might be one of the best “undiscovered” neighborhoods in Canton. Much of the original construction is of quite high quality and many houses have desirable features such as additional bathrooms, attached garages, and attractive landscaping. Most of the newer properties were built as one-story houses. Almost 73% of the houses are homeowner properties and many of the rental houses are maintained at a homeowner standard.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Description	Number
Houses	251
Duplexes	5
Multi-family	1
Average year built	1943
Average size	1,247
Properties lived in by homeowner	185 (72.8% of known)
Investment Properties	69 (27.2% of known)
Unknown owner/rental	2

When assessing the neighborhood, windshield surveys identified about 180 good condition houses, with 74 of those properties having an excellent rating. About 75 houses were given a fair rating, usually noting the need for a roof replacement or deteriorating paint. Only eight properties were identified as severely troubled in addition to nine abandoned properties. This means only 6% of the houses were seen as a major concern; this compares favorably with some of the most sought-after neighborhoods in the city.

Regrettably, the very weak real estate market undermines all of this positive information. Even before the recent downturn in sales nationwide, this neighborhood did not support an active sales market. Now that the local and national economies are even weaker, the picture has become more bleak. In the six months from October 2009 through March 2010, only two properties were sold in the neighborhood. Sale prices were \$7,000 and \$49,995. These houses were on the market for an average of 194 days before selling. Two additional houses are pending sale. Their listing prices were \$55,900 and \$79,900. They have been on the market for an average of 86 days. These are prices and listing times better resembling what should be happening in this neighborhood.



There are currently five houses for sale in the designated area. Listing prices range from \$34,900 to \$57,000. These houses have been on the market for an average of 324 days, so there doesn't appear to be an active effort to sell. There are also three houses in the neighborhood whose listings have recently expired without selling. The list prices ranged from \$15,000 to \$159,900. These houses were on the market for an average of 169 days before expiring.

REAL ESTATE INFORMATION

Recent Sales

Address	Listing Price	Sale Price	Listing Date	Sale Date	Type	Year Built	Square Footage
351 Henrietta Ave NE	\$15,000	\$7,000	6/11/09	3/5/10	Single family	1929	1,248
324 Freedom Ave NE	\$49,995	\$49,995	8/18/09	12/16/09	Single family	1955	1,308

Pending Sale

Address	Listing Price	Listing Date	Type	Year Built	Square Footage
321 Hamilton Avenue NW	\$55,900	12/18/09	Single family	1958	1,188
2437 Georgetown Road NE	\$79,900	3/29/10	Single family	1956	1,228

Currently on Market

Address	Listing Price	Listing Date	Type	Year Built	Square Footage
215 Girard Ave NE (originally listed for \$39,900)	\$34,900	1/6/10 (9/15/09 originally)	Single family	1919	1,248
445 Hamilton	\$44,900	10/28/09	Single family	1955	840
332 Hamilton NE (originally listed for \$59,900)	\$57,000	1/28/10 (10/7/09 originally)	Single family	1957	1,298
2146 4 th St NE (originally listed for \$43,900)	\$36,900	3/26/10 (7/9/09 originally)	Single family	1918	1,172
2142 4 th St NE (originally listed for \$49,900)	\$49,900	1/20/10 (originally listed on 6/4/08)	Single family	1919	1,248

Recently Expired

Address	Listing Price	Listing Date	Expire Date	Type	Year Built	Square Footage
344 Fenton Avenue NE (vacant, bank owned)	\$15,000	11/23/09	4/12/10	Single family	1921	1,091
429 Gobel Avenue NE	\$28,900	8/14/09	2/14/10	Single family	1941	1,128
438 Hamilton Avenue NE	\$159,900	6/22/09	12/22/09	Single family	2004	1,752

WORKPLAN



While this neighborhood is one of the most attractive and most affordable in the city, it clearly remains a seriously undervalued market. Although some of the properties are selling for \$50,000 or more, these higher priced houses are some of the finest that were built in the 1950's after World War II. Monthly payments of principal, interest, taxes and insurance are usually under \$500 a month. While these are very attractive to homebuyers, such low costs weaken confidence among homeowners. Such depressed entry prices are just too low to encourage investment confidence among current and even future owners.

So how can current owners strengthen confidence to attract a broader pool of buyers and encourage even more investment? What are the core concerns that the neighborhood faces? In many cases, the concerns are entirely predictable. Current and future residents are asking if the completely rebuilt Belden Elementary School offers a quality education. There are also concerns about educational standards at the middle school. Property owners are anxious about disinvestment patterns to the west of the neighborhood where property abandonment is increasing. But these conditions and concerns exist in many parts of the city. Why does this quality neighborhood seem to have so little status as a community of choice?

Perhaps the single most important factor is the location that appears to be working to the disadvantage of both East End neighborhoods. Because commercial and institutional life is thriving elsewhere, this part of town is less well known and has less convenience. There is no shopping center or major food retailer associated with the area. There are no libraries, growing churches, or public facilities that attract visitors while serving the local population.



Further, there are some local issues that undermine confidence. A large local Catholic church may be closed and abandonment is increasing just off of Tusc and along Belden Avenue. To the west, the rapid disinvestment in single-family houses is producing too much low quality rental, which in turn is increasing the potential for marginal rental properties in the Tusc East End neighborhoods. All of this taken together weakens reinvestment anywhere in the East End.

Such negatives are surely important, but there are also strong mitigating factors. The neighborhood has easy access to shopping and downtown via major streets, especially Tusc and Belden, and the residents have almost immediate access to Route 30. Just east of the neighborhood, there are some of the finest new residential properties in the area and, of course, the neighborhood can boast of its excellent housing stock and outstanding homeownership behaviors.

However, there is a paradox. For this part of the East End, the quality of the homes and environment should truly be making this a neighborhood of choice because people usually decide to live in a place offering both quality homes and good neighbors. But for this community, a low profile as well as concerns about nearby problems and a location away from other activities, work together to undermine its future. The challenge isn't to greatly improve an already desirable neighborhood; the principal goal is to substantially increase confidence in the community as a place of choice today and in the future.

The first step in this process focuses on retaining homeowners and motivating current property owners to reinvest. Most of these efforts will be relatively low cost, but they should be structured for high visibility.



In the Canton Neighborhoods Workbook there are a number of examples for small-scale confidence building initiatives. In particular, for this part of the East End, there should be a major emphasis on celebrating the excellent standards already in place. For example, there should be annual awards for individuals nominated as being great neighbors. These are the people that maintain a good property while also helping other residents be safe and house-proud. Of course, excellent properties should also be honored with Best House Awards and perhaps seasonally with best decorated, best landscaped, and most improved.

Further, because the neighborhood lacks a clear identity, a concentrated branding program should attach the neighborhood name and logo at various sites and provide house window stickers and bumper stickers with the neighborhood name and motto. Once these first steps of identification are in place, the residents should partner with the real estate community and aggressively market any for-sale houses. This coordinated marketing effort is often called "Pick Your Own Neighbor", which may include special open houses of neighborhood properties at which local residents bring their friends, family, and co-workers to see the properties. The national experience is that excellent owners have access to many stable households who could be great owners of properties, especially those in this neighborhood, which have fair prices and relatively few repair problems.

The concerned residents are also the best means of promoting retention of current stable households. They know which residents are having trouble repairing their home, so they can help by referring the household to city and private programs. Involved residents also often know if a renter wants to move and can refer them to other quality units in the area or even suggest that the renter become an owner.



Similar examples of these low-cost, high-involvement approaches can be found in the Canton Neighborhoods Workbook. There are dozens of initiatives that will work in this neighborhood; the challenge is selecting what to do and then taking action. Therefore, it is recommended that the residents of East End North, especially the members of the neighborhood associations, come together around a workplan for community stability. It is suggested that this workplan include the following:

1. IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

The neighborhood needs few demolitions; perhaps only six to eight properties aren't worth repairing. Some are already scheduled, but they all need to come down as soon as possible. Also, a temporary plan for lot maintenance needs to be established with the immediate neighbors or with the neighborhood associations.

As a qualified NSP neighborhood, the community should be considered for renovation and resale of foreclosed houses and possibly for new construction by Habitat for Humanity, ABCD, or other qualified nonprofit builders. This can occur now or with NSP recapture funds. However, whether this happens or not, there must be a marketing plan to promote sales of houses in the area along with community events to build internal and external awareness of the neighborhood. This means undertaking both promotional and celebratory events.

2. DETERMINING PRIORITIES FOR TARGETING

The neighborhood has a very strong mix of housing options and far too little demand, so there should be a focus on building the pool of buyers. Since there are so many house-proud owners, every effort should be made to encourage them to invest even more in their homes. Since the neighborhood quality and amenities are so little known, the local leaders should celebrate and promote East End North as a neighborhood of choice. They should market the area through proactive techniques that target the strongest blocks and minimize the negative aspects of the weakest blocks.

3. SELECTING POSSIBLE MARKET NICHES FOR INVESTMENT

Where should marketing happen first? One approach would argue for the strongest blocks in the eastern half of the neighborhood, but an equally good target might be the more modestly priced older houses closer to the school. Part of the answer requires determining who is likely a good homebuyer candidate and what loan resources can be made available. Further, Tusc East remains the front door of the neighborhood, but this street also has a history of houses remaining unsold for months and years. This specific group of houses is critical to much of the public perception of both parts of the East End and a coordinated joint marketing effort should be put in place.

4. SUGGESTING POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR CITY AND RESIDENT ACTION

The residents, elected officials, and the city staff need to come together to create an aggressive, well-planned approach to the demolition of the few abandoned houses and the re-use of the resulting vacant lots. As part of this process, the residents should commit to creating a neighborhood volunteer team to deal with the lots and homes of those no longer able to adequately maintain their properties. Moreover, volunteers should help maintain the land around vacant, foreclosed houses and assist in the

marketing of all available properties. Further, the residents, the neighborhood associations, and others should link with Belden Elementary School for events and promotions and assist the school in marketing itself.

5. DETERMINING RESOURCE NEEDS AND SUGGESTING POSSIBLE OPTIONS

In Canton, there are limited philanthropic resources for neighborhood renewal; therefore, it is important that those resources be deployed in ways that most enhance neighborhood stability and self-help. In addition to resident leadership development, there should be direct assistance to the East End to remarket itself in conjunction with a partnership with the Canton real estate community. This assistance could include special lending packages to encourage first-time buyers or even loans for property upgrades for existing homeowners and committed landlords.

6. PARTNERING WITH THE CITY, THE SCHOOLS, AND OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS TO ADDRESS CERTAIN ISSUES IMPACTING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS ALONG TUSC EAST

East End North is the most stable neighborhood in the larger Tusc East community. Therefore, there is a great responsibility to partner with other neighborhoods and groups to strengthen the whole of the East End and the larger Tusc East area. Once successes are achieved as described above, every effort must be made to partner with others to reposition the overall community as a place of choice. This will enhance East End North and grow the equity worth of the homes.

CHALLENGES FOR THE RESIDENTS

The residents of East End North will determine whether this community is successfully repositioned as a neighborhood of choice for a larger pool of buyers and renters. There are various steps that could be used to carry out the workplan described above. Use the Canton Neighborhoods Workbook and select those that will be most useful in moving your decisions. You might choose to:

- ✓ Assist in developing a neighborhood survey to identify opportunities and problems that might not be immediately obvious
- ✓ Create neighborhood identity themes, messages, and a promotional campaign to make the neighborhood better known
- ✓ Use the identity and image efforts to involve more residents and achieve neighborhood branding, both internally and externally
- ✓ Partner with real estate professionals to market the neighborhood to homebuyers through events and open houses
- ✓ Engage a wide range of neighbors – homeowners, renters, elderly, new families, young people, etc. – in all events, activities and celebrations
- ✓ Include quality landlords as fellow stakeholders
- ✓ Partner with the city on clean-up events, landscaping projects, demolition activity, lot maintenance, and other community improvement initiatives

CHALLENGES FOR THE CITY OF CANTON

- ✓ Assist the neighborhood groups on all activities, (i.e., surveys, clean-ups, gateway signs, landscaping projects, celebrations, etc.)
- ✓ Commit to working with the neighbors on demolition projects and vacant lot treatments
- ✓ Consider working with nonprofits, lenders, and foundations to develop special lending packages to give incentives to new homebuyers participating in the neighborhood marketing events
- ✓ Work with funders and the school system to achieve the Neighborhoods of Promise goals, regardless of funding
- ✓ Assist the residents in determining their role in promoting the blocks west of Belden

CHALLENGE TO NONPROFITS, FUNDERS, THE SCHOOLS, AND OTHERS

- ✓ Continue to encourage neighborhood leadership development and greatly increased resident participation
- ✓ Support promotion activities to disseminate a positive image and message
- ✓ Fund community projects, landscaping activities, entry sign installations, etc., which will strengthen relationships and build identity
- ✓ Provide the necessary support staff acting as an early intervention in neighborhood change
- ✓ Consider developing special lending resources to promote more homebuying
- ✓ Facilitate the goals of the Neighborhoods of Promise school initiative
- ✓ Partner with the residents around any school related promotion

EAST END SOUTH

NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

North	East	South	West
Tuscarawas Street East (south side only)	Cole Avenue SE	US 30	Belden Ave SE (east side only)

The southeast portion of Tusc East End is a stable neighborhood of modest single-family brick or frame houses. Some are on wide lots but most are on standard width lots with very deep backyards. This pattern of construction creates a sense of an urban neighborhood because the houses are relatively close to each other, but there is also a feeling of suburban openness because of the generous rear yards. Most lots are well maintained and trees provide a mature canopy that adds to the attractiveness of the community. Although the southern boundary is US 30, noise barriers have reduced the sound so much that the quiet suburban feel of the neighborhood is not impacted significantly.



The neighborhood consists of 113 single-family houses and 7 duplexes. The houses average nearly 1200 square feet. Because of large, undeveloped tracts of land, there are over one hundred vacant lots, but these are sites that were never built on, so there isn't a sense of abandoned space. Rather, the feel is the availability of open space. A small number of houses were built by Habitat for Humanity in the last twenty years, but most of the houses were constructed just before and after World War II, except for those closest to Tusc East and to Belden Avenue SE. The overall condition of the houses is good with a few being truly outstanding. On the other hand, the feel of the neighborhood is much less manicured than the area north

of Tusc East. While not under-maintained, the houses and lawns are not as carefully tended as the blocks to the north. Many people will find this informality a selling point, since the neighborhood seems to have found a balance between picture-perfect maintenance and poor upkeep.

There are less than a half-dozen abandoned or long-term vacant houses, but this problem has recently begun to grow. The relative inactivity of the sales market doesn't suggest that there is much potential for changes in ownership. One house has sold in the last six months. It had only been on the market for about four months, but it couldn't get the asking price of \$7900 and instead sold for \$6500. It was a large, corner house with good architectural features but was near two abandoned houses. Two other houses are pending sales. One smaller, older property was offered at a price under \$12,000. The other property was marketed at \$60,000, but it is very large at over 1500 square feet and was built in 2008. This range of prices isn't a good indicator of the neighborhood, although it does suggest that attention should be paid to the softness of

the real estate market coupled with the recent increase in abandonment.



Other elements in the neighborhood are two churches. One is Seventh-Day Adventist and the other is St. Benedict Roman Catholic Church. The first is a small, well-maintained facility on a quiet street; the latter has a major physical presence along Tusc East. It includes a large sanctuary and a now-closed school facility. Otherwise there are a few small businesses that are tucked in or near residential blocks, but without any apparent major impact or disruptions.

NEIGHBORHOOD DESCRIPTION

Description	Number
Single family houses	113
Duplexes	7
Multi-family	0
Vacant Residential Land Parcels	110
Average year built	1939
Average size	1183 square feet
Properties lived in by homeowner	75 (62.5%)
Investment Properties	45 (37.5%)
Unknown owner/rental	0

REAL ESTATE INFORMATION

Recent Sales

Address	Listing Price	Sale Price	Listing Date	Sale Date	Type	Year Built	Square Footage
211 Girard Ave	\$7,900	\$6,500	10/1/09	2/24/10	Single family	1924	1360

Pending Sale

Address	Listing Price	Listing Date	Type	Year Built	Square Footage
2131 3 rd St SE	\$11,900	10/1/09	Single family	1924	1080
322 Belden Ave SE	\$60,000	3/19/09	Single family	2008	1552

WORKPLAN

Much like the neighborhood to the north, Tusc East End South is dealing with a variety of challenges.

1. First, the low prices make investor purchases very easy, while at the same time low prices discourage improvements to the properties by homeowners and investors.
2. Second, the quiet location and low key aspects are a double-edged sword, since East End South is convenient, but isn't seen as convenient because of the absence of nearby commercial and institutional activity.
3. Third, while this neighborhood has had few distressed properties until recently, the first signs of abandonment are happening along 2nd and 3rd Streets SE.
4. Fourth, and perhaps most important, this neighborhood faces strong competition from the blocks immediately to the north. For households interested in living in the East End, the manicured lots and well-built houses to the north are being marketed at very competitive prices. Moreover, if you are going to buy, it is both easier to find a house to the north and probably easier to finance it.



Given these dynamics and many challenges shared with East End North, it is likely that the residents will need to shape a workplan that promotes what is distinct and desirable about East End South. At the same time, residents can partner with the larger neighborhood to the north, especially through joint marketing, promotional activities, and events that promote Belden Elementary School.

This might sound like a recommendation to act like the younger brother to East End North, but instead it is a suggestion to piggyback on the work of the larger neighborhood while still retaining the uniqueness of East End South. Indeed, the smaller size of the community allows a more neighborly approach to events and projects. For example, there is the potential for a neighborhood Fourth of July picnic or a community-wide back-to-school event. The neighborhood has some wonderful open spaces, in particular the parking lots, playgrounds, and lawns of the Catholic Church. This sort of informal community common space is a wonderful asset. It also allows an opportunity to better link a major institution with the neighbors who live around it. By partnering with the Church, this large facility doesn't become a symbol of vacancy. An example of this partnering would be a multi-family yard sale in the church lot. Perhaps 10% of the proceeds could go to St. Benedict's for exterior upkeep.



Another advantage of the smaller size of East End South is that it encourages residents to interact as neighbors. There could easily be an informal system for neighbor-to-neighbor tool lending or for sharing plants or excess fall produce. These are virtues that many other places can't achieve. Of course, building solid relationships among neighbors isn't easy or self-evident. Some neighborhoods have structured ways to welcome new owners and renters to their communities. Other places rely heavily on block clubs or other formal organizations.



Whether as a neighborhood leader or just one of the residents of this great neighborhood, reading the Canton Neighborhoods Workbook will be helpful. Many of the questions deal with neighborhoods in much greater distress, but even some of those answers could be used as East End South deals with its changing conditions.

Certain themes in the Workbook have special meaning in East End South. For example, a key issue is the importance of identity and gateways. For most neighborhoods, the gateways or entrances set a tone for the neighborhood. In

the case of both East End areas, there are problems with the gateways. For East End South, too many of the houses along Belden Avenue SW are not setting good standards and too many of the troubled houses near the Catholic Church are undermining the positive feel of much of the neighborhood. Further, the under-the-radar identity of the area undermines its ability to attract solid homebuyers and stable renters. East End South is a great neighborhood that deserves to be better known.

As part of that process, there are, of course, problems that should be addressed. The residents should work with the city government to identify the abandoned houses, agree on a demolition schedule, and create plans for each of the new vacant lots. Likewise, a similar effort could deal with the minor code compliance issues that are beginning to surface.

In a more proactive sense, the residents should consider small activities such as selecting shared flower choices to make the place feel more special. Perhaps the neighbors could agree to plant daffodils by providing two-dozen bulbs to every participating household. Each spring this will create a sense of identity and uniqueness. This could easily be tied to a “Welcome to Canton” sign for those exiting Route 30 to create an even more positive mindset for anyone entering or passing by the neighborhood.

A parallel effort could be tied to Belden Elementary School, which is a key asset for both East End neighborhoods. It would be beneficial to undertake joint events at the school to build neighborhood identity and community involvement. Also, East End South should focus on the back-to-school events that cement the neighborhood to the school and potentially to the middle school.



What is the goal of these efforts? It is to promote the notion that East End South is a well-loved, small neighborhood of stable households sharing a sense of neighborliness and community pride.

To summarize these ideas into a two year workplan is especially difficult because there will be two distinct phases that could proceed quickly or possibly take more time. The first phase is outreach and activities in the neighborhood to create the sense of neighborliness and a clearer identity. The second phase involves partnering with East End North, which will have its own timeframe. Part of that second phase will be working with Belden Elementary and possibly even the neighborhoods to the west of Belden Avenue. This means that the largest task may be working with all the groups and stakeholders along Tusc East to have a shared approach to managing neighborhood transition over the next decade.

CHALLENGE TO THE RESIDENTS

With such a low profile in Canton, it is up to the residents of East End South to communicate what they want to do and how to accomplish those goals. The Stark Community Foundation leadership workshops can help in this process as can the Canton Neighborhoods Workbook. Nevertheless, it will be the neighbors that will make sure something happens. Some initial actions by the residents could include:

- ✓ Developing a neighborhood survey to identify opportunities and issues
- ✓ Selecting identity themes and messages and creating a promotional plan for the neighborhood
- ✓ Involving as many residents, institutions, and groups as possible in events, projects and celebrations
- ✓ Working with the city government on clean-up and gardening projects, prioritizing demolition, and creating plans for vacant lots

Later phases will include:

- ✓ Developing shared projects with Belden Elementary School
- ✓ Partnering with real estate professionals to market the neighborhood and expand lending options
- ✓ Involving quality landlords in property improvement efforts
- ✓ Working together with East End North to achieve joint goals
- ✓ Investigating ways to assist the neighborhoods to the west

CHALLENGES FOR THE CITY GOVERNMENT

- ✓ Assisting the East End South residents in the activities of their choosing, which could mean events, surveys, clean-ups, gateway signs, landscaping projects, celebrations, etc.
- ✓ Agreeing to a plan for demolition projects and vacant lot disposition
- ✓ Working with the residents and the real estate community around better lending for home purchases
- ✓ Partnering to achieve the Neighborhoods of Promise grant or to at least carry out some of the goals of that program
- ✓ Participating actively in efforts of any groups that are improving the blocks west of Belden Avenue above and below Tusc East

CHALLENGE TO NONPROFITS, FUNDERS, THE SCHOOLS, AND OTHERS

- ✓ Encouraging resident leadership development and resident participation
- ✓ Funding promotional activities around positive images and messages
- ✓ Supporting small-scale projects, such as gardening activities, gateways, community events, programs with the school, etc.
- ✓ Funding a part-time outreach worker to jumpstart the “neighborly” projects
- ✓ Partnering with city government around special lending for homebuying
- ✓ Funding at least some of the goals of the Neighborhoods of Promise school initiative and joint activities among residents, Belden Elementary, and neighborhood groups

THE WEST OF BELDEN AVENUE CHALLENGE

Is Belden Avenue a demarcation line where severe disinvestment is kept to the west? Or are Belden Avenue and Tusc East the gateways into many eastside neighborhoods in need of investment? These questions aren't rhetorical; they are very important when trying to allocate limited resources. What follows is an example of what could be decided and announced by Tusc East End residents.

Our Position on the Eastside Neighborhoods

The residents of Tusc East End want to be very clear with the city leadership and funding organizations. We will work hard to keep our neighborhoods beautiful, well-managed places, but we want a two-part commitment from the city government and from corporate and philanthropic groups.

The first commitment is that we will not be forgotten or overlooked in the future. We have an enormous investment of financial and social equity and we expect to be assisted in maintaining and growing that equity. We expect targeted demolition to take place promptly, not after the cancer has spread. We expect fair but serious enforcement of codes. Finally, we expect modest financial and staff support to allow us to organize and market our neighborhoods as great places to live.

Second, we are willing to work very hard to improve the neighborhoods to the west, but there must be a rational set of strategies that address the outdated road system, the extensive abandonment problems, the concentration of low-income households, and the inadequate application of even the most basic code enforcement effort. If the city government and civic leaders are serious about all neighborhoods along Tuscarawas Street East, there should be consistent, concise plans with clear benchmarks that we all understand and which we all can help succeed.

The Tusc East End neighborhoods need to communicate their roles as outstanding, working-income communities with good housing. This housing is located on quiet streets with few abandoned, distressed, or severely substandard houses, and has good schools that have the resources necessary for excellence. This cannot be fully achieved without some vision or strategy for all the Tusc East communities. Once that vision is in place, it will be easier to address the outmoded one-way streets, the abandonment problem (especially around the schools and on the gateways), the need for targeted code enforcement, and the resource challenges of the schools and the neighborhood groups.

As residents of Tusc East, we are asking for a concrete set of plans and policies with benchmarks for performance by all the partners. If local civic and government leaders cannot convene to create such plans, we will attempt to shape the futures of our neighborhoods without partnering with the larger community. It is up to good leadership to meet this challenge.